

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF LEAP AFRICA'S PANEL SESSION AT AFRICANXT 2023

On the 9th of February 2023, LEAP Africa held a panel session at AFRICANXT 2023 themed Youthful and Useful: Building Collaborations Across Africa for the #AfricaWeWant. Speaking on the panel, we had Tiwalola "TJ Dotts" Olanubi, Founder, Dotts Media, Dr. Munirat Antoinette Lecky, Educator, Entertainer, Entrepreneur, Daniel Emenahor, Programme Manager, British Council, and Ellen Ukpi, Communications Manager, LEAP Africa. The panel session was moderated by Funmilola Morakinyo, Communications Coordinator, LEAP Africa who warmly welcomed everyone and the discussions commenced. The panelists discussed the challenges they have faced in their various attempts to collaborate across Africa, the solutions deployed in combating these challenges and opportunities of collaboration in Africa

In discussing the challenges of collaboration, one of our panelists stated that a combination of youthful energy and ignorance is a ticking time bomb. Young people's lack of awareness and in-depth knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which facilitate collaboration, leading to pathways to change and impact in their communities has posed a challenge to collaborations across Africa. The actualization of the SDGs is pivotal to birthing the Africa we want.

In executing an initiative like LEAP Africa's Youth Day of Service, it was discovered that it is difficult to collaboratively execute projects across Africa while in Africa. Funds have to be disbursed

in dollars which is a western currency because as Africa, we do not have an African currency that is readily acceptable as legal tender across Africa. We do not have a shared airspace in Africa and in most instances, it is more expensive to travel within Africa than it is to travel from Africa to another continent. We are more fixated on our differences than the attributes, resources, and values that unite us as a continent, therefore making collaborations tedious.

It has been estimated that Africa has between 1500 - 2000 languages and this is yet another factor that makes exporting knowledge and solutions across Africa difficult for Africans.





Cross Section of Participants at the Panel Discussion, Landmark Centre, Lagos



Cross Section of Participants and Panelists at the Panel Discussion, Landmark Centre, Lagos



Left to Right: Victor Vincent - LEAP Africa, Funmilola Morakinyo - LEAP Africa, Aniebiet Udokang - LEAP Africa, Ellen Ukpi - LEAP Africa, Joy Igbiniedion - LEAP Africa, Theresa Edet - LEAP Africa, Joshua Olawuyi - LEAP Africa



Opeoluwa Awoyode - AfricaNxt, Aniebiet Udokang - LEAP Africa, Theresa Edet - LEAP Africa

Another challenge that was highlighted is one that we do not often speak about and that is imposter syndrome. When you think you are not good enough for the person or organisation you want to collaborate with, it is probable that even if a collaboration happens, it will not attain its full potential in delivering the best outputs. One of our panelists described how this can impede collaboration. For collaborations to be successful, our panelists discussed some cogent and salient points, some of which are mentioned below:

1. It is important that all parties involved in a collaborative process have explicit understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and expectations are adequately managed. This solves the challenge of ambiguity and reduces the chances of the collaboration failing.
2. The actualization of the Africa we want transcends leveraging media to express youthful energy. It is imperative to seek knowledge about the industries we play in. There has been an awakening of the African youth to political matters. It is however important that young people understand how

to navigate the political climate to successfully participate and effect change.

3. Although social media has created a platform where we can collaborate across Africa by simply sending a direct message to someone, even though they do not reside in the same country as you, we need to be intentional about our work and take active steps to collaborate. Some people may not respond when you reach out to them to initiate collaboration but that should not deter you.
4. One of our panelists suggested that until we figure out what is wrong with home, collaborations will not be as effective as they ought to be. African countries face similar challenges and we must explore avenues of exporting solutions from our country to other African countries. A common challenge across African countries is bad leadership and 2023 is the election year for Nigeria as well as Zimbabwe. With the recent youth awakening to political matters, conversations are ongoing with youths in Zimbabwe to deliberate on the solutions that can be exported from Nigeria and tested in Zimbabwe. It is crucial that we work

towards a united Africa.

5. We have succeeded in advocacy with the media and young people now have a voice. Social media has played a vital role in amplifying the voices of young people. However, we need to ensure that our voices are heard in the right quarters and what actions are taken. The media has given us a voice, it should be used as a tool to also spur us into action. We need to develop sustainable solutions by being intentional about collaboration. Even if you can do it alone, it is better to collaborate.

6. We need to understand and leverage the power of technology to solve social problems and bring about sustainable change. Young people are going into the tech industry to get international jobs, however, it is time to deliberately utilise this knowledge to collaborate for sustainable change.

7. It is evident that the challenges we face are Pan-African, therefore, we have to start looking for ways to create Pan-African solutions to these problems, instead of individualistic solutions.

8. It is equally instructive to bridge the gap between the older and younger generations to leverage their strengths in collaborative efforts.

9. Finally, as young people, we should seek to build horizontal collaborations instead of waiting on the big brands to collaborate with us. Collaborating with other young people with similar interests and values who are also building their brands will provide the necessary track record we need to prove our competence, thereby facilitating vertical collaborations.

As we concluded this panel session, one of our panelists asked a critical question, "What Next?". It is important that we have these conversations, to create awareness and enlighten young people about the opportunities that exist in collaboration, it is however more important that beyond the discussions, we take action by deliberately seeking opportunities for collaboration and seizing the opportunities for the actualization of the Africa we want.

AfricaNXT for the past eleven years has been a platform for celebrating African ingenuity, and bringing to the fore, Africa-centred discussions, to further enhance collaborations and empower African creatives, innovators and entrepreneurs for the actualization of a better and more integrated Africa. This year's theme: Cooperate.Collaborate. Innovate. Unlocking Our Potential, Ensuring Africa's Prosperity resonated with the programmatic efforts of LEAP Africa over the last 20 years, geared towards building an ecosystem of youth-focused individuals and organisations, collaborating across Africa to deliver the Africa we want.



From L-R : Ellen Ukpi, Funmilola Morakinyo, Tiwalola "TJ Dotts" Olanubi, Dr. Munirat Antoinette Lecky, Daniel Emenahor